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AUTHOR Jenkins, Martin D.
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ABSTRACT

This paper follows the course of the National Coalition for Campus Child Care through its 20-year history. During this period, the organization has pursued its belief that child care should be provided as an integral part of higher education in America. The crises which the organization has overcome are typical of those frequently encountered by new organizations, whether they are campus child care centers or national constituent groups. This history of the National Coalition offers lessons to those who would analyze this organization as a model of some of the phases through which start-up organizations must pass on their way to institutionalization and success. The history also discusses plans of the Coalition's board to ensure the success of the Coalition and move the mature organization to an even closer connection with its constituents and their interests. (BB)

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THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR CAMPUS CHILD CARE: A STUDY IN STRATEGIC SUCCESS

Martin D. Jenkins
Organizational Resources Group

"NCCCC - A Study in Strategic Success"

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Martin D. Jenkins, Senior Associate
Organizational Resources Group
506 Lambourne Avenue
Worthington, Ohio 43085-2417
(614) 846-2938

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Those who study the life cycle of organizations know new, non-profit constituent organizations travel a precarious route. In this article, Mr. Jenkins follows the course of the National Coalition for Campus Child Care from its early days as the ambitious idea of a few zealots to an exuberant organizations with a 20-year history of pursuing its belief that child care should be provided as an integral part of higher education in America. The path of the National Coalition has been typical of the life cycle of organizations and the crises which the organization has met and successfully overcome are typical of those frequently encountered by new organizations, be they campus child care centers or national constituent groups. In this history of the National Coalition are lessons for those who would analyze the Coalition as a model of some of the phases through which start-up organizations must pass on their way to institutionalization and success. This article also talks about the plans which have been made by the Board to consolidate the success of its history and move the mature organization even closer to a connection with its constituents and their interests.

THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR CAMPUS CHILD CARE: A STUDY IN STRATEGIC SUCCESS

By Martin D. Jenkins*

Those who study the life cycle of organizations know new, non-profit constituent organizations travel a precarious route. The path of a few zealots' moving an idea to success as a worthy, national organization having the support of a professional constituency is a path littered with the fossil remains of organizations which didn't successfully navigate the path. The National Coalition for Campus Child Care faced all the usual tests as it moved from its nascent stage to the form in which we find it today. The journey has not been without its moments and success was sometimes at the precipice, but with the recent adoption of its strategic plan, the Coalition has reached maturity. Further tests remain but the organization has developed credibility among its constituents and among child care professionals in general.

Today, the National Coalition for Campus Child Care, Inc., is an exuberant organization with only a 20-year history of pursuing its belief that child care should be provided as an integral part of higher education in America. As is characteristic of the life cycle of organizations, NCCCC was the dream of a few visionary founders who were characterized by both intense creativity and deep commitment to campus child care. Their commitment to the cause matched the tenor of the era and they built upon that synergy. They used it to bring energy and resources to their quest to provide a voice for the emerging body of professionals who were bringing developmental child care programs to America's campuses.

The organization, again typically of fledgling collectives, began as an informally structured association characterized by a loose, flexible structure

infused with the energies of its founders. Since its founding in 1970, the Coalition has worked to pursue the purposes of campus child care and provide a national forum for the sharing and dissemination of ideas and information.

Seen today as the clear voice of campus child care, NCCCC's early years saw it function as the Robert F. Kennedy Council for Campus Child Care -- primarily a advocacy group. From its initial year to 1975 the Council operated on grant funding and focused on a national legislative agenda. In 1976 the name was changed to the National Council and support moved away from grant funding. With this move came the organization's first significant life-cycle crisis. Conventional wisdom holds that small, young organizations grow through the creativity of a few dedicated leaders. As they experience success and their idea catches on, a crisis of leadership occurs. At this juncture the issue is whether ownership and leadership can be routinized and disseminated to those who will accept responsibility for an increasingly complex entity. Many organizations fail this test either because the founding persons cannot give up control or because members will not step forward to add association leadership to their list of professional and personal duties. The National Council passed the test and the stage was set for its future maturation.

In 1979 the National Coalition for Campus Child Care emerged from the rich soil prepared by its predecessor organizations. A new structure and new opportunities became possible even as members grieved for the passage of the Council in its earlier form and with its more informal style. Some of the new opportunities which helped sustain the Coalition's growth were the provision of office facilities, more systematized communications with members on organizational issues and the development of policies and procedures. An interim board was put in place in 1980 and began the development of the

Coalition as a organization capable of supporting and mirroring the accelerating development of child care on America's campuses.

In 1982 the most successful national conference to-date was held and the Coalition's professional leadership was asserted through the development of the bibliography which continues to be updated and made available to members seeking to remain current with developmental issues. In 1983 the Coalition became a dues paying organization and was incorporated, another step in the evolution of a permanent structure to supporting member services.

By 1985 the Coalition was mature enough to celebrate its past and the Athenian Council was created to recognize the role played by those who provided leadership in the organization's early days and who continued to provide guidance as role models to the profession. In 1986 the Coalition called attention to its role as the standard setter for campus child care with the publishing of "How to Start a Campus Child Care Center." That same year a newsletter was added to increase communication among members.

In 1988 Campus Child Care: Issues and Practices was published and the Coalition became listed with NAEYC as one of the information resource services available to that organization's membership. The following year a special issue of the Journal of Instructional Psychology expanded the Coalition's visibility among child care professionals. In that same year, NCCCC began a strategic leadership process intended to chart a course for the association as a mature, stable entity speaking for campus child care into the next decade.

From the strategic leadership process came a crisp statement of the Coalition's vision of excellence. The Coalition's board committed itself to measuring the success of their stewardship by several yardsticks. First was the services and benefits the Coalition would be able to bring to its members.

These were seen as a key to excellence. Knowing the needs of members and having data and publications available to speak to those needs plus having models available to depict best practices in campus child care were illustrations. Another dimension of excellence was getting technical assistance and information into the hands of members.

A second yardstick for measuring excellence was professional empowerment. The Coalition plan emphasizes strategies to help members assume leadership roles on college campuses and in the profession generally. The Coalition will advocate for campus child care and the interests of the professionals who provide this critical service.

The Board also committed the Coalition to working to link its work with the membership and retain and extend the representativeness of the field in the Coalition and its Board. Finally, success will be measured in the development of adequate resources to support excellence for the Coalition -- these resources include financial resources but as a mature organization, the Coalition knows that also included are legitimacy, credibility and visibility. The leaders recognize that these resources, too, must be managed to assure continued viability for the Coalition.

The life cycle analogy remains appropriate for the Coalition. The theory holds that mature organizations grow and sustain progress through collaboration. In the process of developing their strategic plan, the Coalition's Board learned some things about its capacity to collaborate and the energy that came from adding the individual strengths of each board member to the deliberations. They also saw how important is the extension of this principle to all aspects of the Coalition and to all who share responsibility for its work. In that sense, too, the Coalition has come of age and survived the pitfalls of the growth curve of organizations.

* Mr Jenkins is Senior Associate in the Organizational Resources Group, an organizational management consulting firm based in Worthington, Ohio. Mr. Jenkins assisted the National Coalition in the preparation of its strategic plan completed in the Spring of 1990.

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